

Richard B. Cheney, Vice President

Good evening. Thank you very much. And I want to extend a special welcome to those of you who've come from out of town to help us mark the 50th anniversary of DARPA.

I'm genuinely pleased to be here. And let me thank especially my friend and colleague Gordon England for the introduction, and Dr. Tether for the invitation to join all of you tonight. I'm in good company this evening -- with Secretary Don Winter, representatives of the military and industry, and alumni of DARPA. Some of you I've known going back to the time I was Secretary of Defense -- the good old days, when I had real power in this town. (Laughter.)

It's possible that some of us go back even further, to my prior service on the House Intelligence Committee, or even to the administration of Gerald Ford, when I served as his chief of staff. In any case, I've always had great respect for DARPA and its people, and I've been closely interested in your mission.

As Tony remembers, back in 2001, not long after becoming Vice President, I went out to headquarters for a briefing. After eight years out of public life, I was eager to get back up to date on everything that was going on at DARPA. Each time I've met with representatives from DARPA, I've gone away even more deeply impressed by the work product of this agency. Anyone who seeks the very definition of high intellectual standards, creative energy, and hard, persistent effort will find it at DARPA. It's a huge credit to the Defense Department and to the nation. Every one of you can be proud of your association with DARPA -- and tonight I bring congratulations and good wishes from the President of the United States, George W. Bush. (Applause.)



DARPA was, of course, founded in a moment of urgency. It was 1958, and the United States was facing all the implications of the launch of Sputnik the preceding October. The man in the White House, Dwight Eisenhower, didn't scare easy. He had complete, justified confidence in this nation's ability to reclaim the technological edge, and to hold it from then on. But he knew it would take a focused effort within government, public education, and the private sector. Eisenhower knew, as well, that it would require significant investments -- and he trusted that future Presidents and future Congresses would provide those resources. I'm proud to say that DARPA has had many friends in our administration, from the President and myself to Gordon England and two fine leaders of the Pentagon in Don Rumsfeld and Bob Gates.

From the earliest days, it's been the fundamental charge of this agency to make sure that America is never again caught off guard. DARPA's job is to prevent technological surprises -- and to make sure that the great inventions, the breakthroughs, and the game-changing technologies are created by us, not by somebody else. And for 50 incredible years, DARPA has kept that charge.

This agency brought forth the Saturn Five Rocket surveillance satellites, the Internet, stealth technology, guided munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles, night vision, and the body armor that's in use today. During my time as Secretary of Defense, we saw a number of major projects come to fruition. We had the first combat use of stealth technology with the F-117 during Operation Just Cause in '89, and then made extensive use of that aircraft during Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf in 1991. The Gulf War also gave us the first use of the JSTARS command and control aircraft, which allowed us to monitor the movement of enemy forces on the ground hundreds of miles away.

Obviously, these aren't the sort of technologies you decide you need, and then go to the store to buy them. They took years and years to develop and to bring online. And one of the biggest lessons I learned at the Pentagon is just how much you owe that job to your predecessors and to earlier commanders in chief. When the Gulf War was over with I picked up the telephone and I called former President Ronald Reagan and thanked him for the absolutely essential defense buildup of the 1980s. And I remember feeling tremendous gratitude to former Secretaries of Defense, Democrat and Republican alike, who made sure we had the force we needed in that conflict -- public servants like Frank Carlucci, Cap Weinberger, Harold Brown, and Jim Schlesinger. And Don Rumsfeld, too, of course, because he had been President Ford's Defense Secretary in the mid-70s. As I've reminded Don, this makes him the only man to serve as Secretary of Defense in two different centuries. (Laughter and applause.)

One thing we didn't have a lot of in Desert Storm was the unmanned aerial vehicle. But thanks to DARPA, that technology was advancing rapidly in the early '90s. And we've been able to use it all the time in both Afghanistan and Iraq -- for reconnaissance, for remote sensing, and to strike the enemy. DARPA has also brought us the very small UAV's that are so useful to a fighter in the urban warfare setting -- the little machines that Marines refer to as the "guardian angels." You developed the networking technology that foot soldiers are using every day -- to share information on a fast and secure basis, so they can operate within an enemy's reaction time. And there are so many other tools now in common use -- from advanced alert systems, to special gloves that do an almost miraculous job helping troops stay cool in the desert heat -- tools that simply wouldn't be around now if we didn't have DARPA. Most Americans, perhaps, haven't heard of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. But if they knew how much you've done to save and protect our men and women in uniform, they would be grateful beyond words.

We're talking here about a federal agency that fulfills its mission, and delivers results, to a degree that most other organizations would envy. And if we look to the reasons why DARPA has been so consistently successful, we can see some fundamental advantages.

By its charter, DARPA basically has no short-term obligations. It can stay focused not on small increments, but on the big changes. This is critical -- especially in wartime, when the armed forces have more than enough to do, and don't really have the chance to invent, develop, and test disruptive technologies. DARPA is out there every day working on the far side, where the ideas are, and finding ways to bring it over to the near side, where the operations are. And it's driving relentlessly toward the new core of technologies that'll maintain our military superiority far into the future.

DARPA is not encumbered by parochial interests. It defends no status quo, and it doesn't find itself wasting time on turf wars. As Tony Tether has said, DARPA works best as a "swashbuckling place, constantly getting into -- getting management in trouble, constantly [testing] revolutionary, crazy ideas, but always out there in front" where it belongs.

Though it's 50 years old, DARPA has never developed the apparatus or the mindset of a bureaucracy. It's still a highly manageable enterprise, leading huge projects but operating on a human scale. By one description, DARPA is a "hundred geniuses connected by a travel agent." (Laughter.) And DARPA leadership does a terrific job bringing out the best work in government, academia, and the private sector.

The whole ethic of this agency is fresh thinking -- and it preserves that ethic with a high rate of turnover. Everyone at DARPA knows this. In fact, if you work there, your last day on the job is printed right on the front of your I.D. badge. Come to think of it, so is mine. (Laughter and applause.) This may not be the best way to plan out a career -- (laughter) -- but it's all the more reason to admire the people who go into DARPA. The idea is not to settle in, but to dive in, to take up the toughest intellectual challenges, and to know the rewards of turning concepts into actions, and finding out that a project will be a "go."

With all its inherent advantages, plus the incredible talent it brings in, DARPA is rightly known for "setting great minds on fire with big ideas." And it doesn't overstate matters to say that we need this creative force more than ever before.

We're engaged right now in a struggle against enemies of a kind not easily dealt with. We're not facing a clash of huge armies and navies. The outcome of the fight won't be like chasing Hitler into his bunker, having a surrender ceremony onboard ship, or wearing down a communist empire. The extremists in this war have a backward ideology, but they have genuine global ambitions -- and there is nothing old-fashioned about the weapons they're trying to get their hands on. Their goal is to intimidate the United States and our friends into dropping our global responsibilities. They would move into that void, impose a dictatorship of fear, and build new staging grounds for further attacks on us. And the toughest part of this fight is the enemy's cult of murder -- the utter rejection of any rules of warfare; the contempt for moral standards; the rejoicing in the blood and tears of innocent people. Their mode of operation is to target the unsuspecting, to lie in wait, and to shock the world in moments of spectacular violence.

As we take the fight to the enemy, they don't engage us force on force. At most, it'll be squad on squad. So we need to keep pressing for absolute superiority in speed, agility, and access to information. In this era of new dangers, I know DARPA has also been pounding hard on the issue of weapons of mass destruction. It's not a pleasant business to think about. But we have to do everything possible to take WMD's off the table as a threat to the United States or its friends. DARPA has already moved us in the right direction, and I'm confident you'll make even more historic progress in that effort. And in the core technologies -- whether it's microsystems, high-efficiency battery cells, or quantum science -- the work of DARPA will be the key to American military dominance far into the future, against any challenge that comes our way.

That future, I believe, will bring us many victories. And the day will come when the cause of tolerance and freedom overcomes the hateful ideologies that have turned their guns on us. A lot of our successes will be easy to quantify. Others will be harder to measure, because they'll be the things that don't happen: the attacks that don't come, the surprises that don't strike us, the harm that doesn't befall an American soldier. But those victories will be just as real. And many of them will occur because years before, somebody sat down and did some hard, disciplined thinking about the future, and came up with a good idea, and had the sturdy support and the guidance of DARPA.

If you've been associated with this agency, you're the kind of person who lives and breathes technology -- and you have a place in the story of the past 50 years. It's a story of boldness and excellence; of visionary, high-yield projects; and of service above self. And all of these have been directed to the highest purposes that a citizen can assume: The safety of our people. The security of our nation. And the survival of freedom itself.

We're an honorable country, a decent country, a generous country. And the world is a better place for the power and the influence of the United States of America. (Applause.) To have a role in this nation's defense is a privilege -- and that privilege has belonged to many in this room this evening. For that, I want to offer my highest personal respect and gratitude -- and my full confidence in DARPA for another outstanding 50 years.

Thank heaven for DARPA, and thank you very, very much. (Applause.)

END 8:24 P.M. EDT